

### Winter Driving Tips

According to the Institute of Insurance Safety, an average of 35,000 people have died each year from auto accidents over the past decade. Of the top seven automobile accidents causes, situations related to snow, ice, and wet roads ranks fifth. While other factors like speed, distractions, fatigue, and other drivers are with us year round, these factors are amplified during poor road conditions. Consider the following to reduce risks associated with winter driving:

#### Prepare: Reduce Risk Before You Start

- Maintain your vehicle prior to, and during winter. Keep tires properly inflated, windshield de-icer full, and the vehicle in good operating condition. Pack emergency blankets, gloves, clothing, water, and medication if needed.
- Start by watching weather reports and plan accordingly for earlier start times and routes. For long distance drives, let others know your route, destination and estimated time of arrival.
- On extreme weather days consider alternatives like rescheduling, phone conferences, or Skype to avoid driving.
- Winter days are shorter and sleep rhythms change so take extra steps to avoid driving while fatigued.
- Never warm a vehicle up in an enclosed area, like a garage, where carbon monoxide can build.
- See and be seen. Keep windows, head lights and brake lights clear before starting each trip.
- Keep your gas tank at least half full to avoid gas line freeze-up and for traffic delays.

#### Driving: Recognize the Hazard, Understand the Defense, Act in Time (National Safety Council).

- All safe driving begins by using seat belts at all times. Also, avoiding distractions is even more important on wet or slippery roads when stop time and steering conditions are affected.
- Look ahead and move your eyes continuously to identify road conditions that obstruct vision, curves, hills, slowing traffic, snow plows, or vehicles off the road. This is the best defense to decelerate slowly and avoid hard braking or sudden steering changes that can start a skid or loss of control.
- Being far sighted also provides a better chance to adjust speed without braking, or to keep moving under control instead of coming to a full stop. Look ahead for snow covered hills to maintain momentum and avoid applying too much gas that can start wheel spinning. Reduce speed at the top and prepare for a controlled descent down the other side.
- Accelerate and decelerate slowly to maintain traction and avoid skidding. Whether you have antilock brakes or not, the best method is to apply firm, steady pressure on the brake pedal.
- Increase your margin of safety. Remember, it takes longer to slow down on icy roads so increase the normal dry-pavement following distance of three to four seconds to eight to 10 seconds.
- Don't use cruise control when driving on slippery surfaces where speed and brake control is even more important.
- Finally, don't forget about safety outside of the car. Watch for slippery spots where you park. Take extra time to exit and enter your car and use the car to stabilize yourself to avoid falling.

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### Accident Response: Be Prepared Just in Case

- Again, know your route and proximity to rescue vehicles, cell phone service, or services. Take extra precautions when driving in remote areas where response will be delayed.
- After turning on flashers, take a minute to assess your situation and whether extra clothing or gear should be put on immediately.
- Don't ever assume that other vehicles can see you or your vehicle flashers if you get out to check the situation.
- If you become snow-bound, stay with your vehicle to obtain temporary shelter, stay out of traffic, and make it easier for others to locate you.
- Don't try to walk in a severe storm. It's easy to lose sight of your vehicle in blowing snow and become lost.
- Avoid over exertion if you try to push or dig your vehicle out of the snow.
- A blocked exhaust can cause deadly carbon monoxide gas to leak into the passenger compartment with the engine running. Make sure the exhaust pipe is clear of snow, ice or mud.
- If possible run the engine and heater just long enough to remove the chill and to conserve gasoline.

